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MONTHLY

DRAMA

New Series

NOVEMBER MCMXXIII

Number 32



VILLAGE SCENE FOR THE FAITHFUL SHEPHERDESS, DESIGNED FOR THE RECENT PRODUCTION BY THE PHENIX SOCIETY. BY NORMAN WILKINSON, OF FOUR OAKS. SCALE, $\frac{1}{2}$ INCH TO 1 FOOT.

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M R. BASIL BLACKWELL, as Publisher to the Shakespeare Head Press, has arranged with the British Drama League to continue the standard Library of new plays, the first four volumes of which were published last year. The new plays are as follows, and will be published at 3s. 6d. net. For special terms to Members of the British Drama League, see below.

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Members of the League and of its affiliated Societies will have the advantage of purchasing the plays at the specially reduced rate of 2s. 6d. net per volume (postage 3d., or for any two, three, or four volumes 6d.), provided that orders are received before publication. To the general public the published price of each volume will be 3s. 6d. net. Members desiring to take advantage of these special terms should fill up immediately the attached form and send it to the Hon. Secretary of the League at 10 King Street, Covent Garden, W.C.2. Members of Societies affiliated to the Drama League must send the form to the Hon. Secretary of their Society with a request that he will forward it to the Hon. Secretary of the League as above.

Date of Application

No copies will be supplied at the reduced rate unless these conditions have been fulfilled, and unless application is made before November 15th, 1923. The date of publication is in November.

A limited and numbered edition of each of the plays, on hand-made paper, signed by the Author, in block-printed hand-made paper boards, vellum back, will be issued at half-a-guinea. Members may apply preferentially for these before publication, but no reduction in price can be made.

PRIZE COMPETITION

A prize of **FIVE GUINEAS** is offered for the best Review of the batch of four books about to be published as announced above. The Review, which must be typed, or very clearly written, must not exceed 1,000 words in length, and should be critical rather than merely descriptive. The winning Review will be printed in **DRAMA**, the Journal of the British Drama League. The Competition, which will be open to members of the League only, will close on January 15th, 1924. Those who are not already members of the League but who wish to become so in order that they may take part in the Competition should apply for particulars of membership, which will be sent to them in return for a postcard addressed to the Hon. Secretary of the Drama League, 10 King Street, Covent Garden, W.C.2.

THE VALUE OF ACTING PLAYS AT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

THE status of drama at a Public School is that of a poor relation living in a rich family—if it shows a tendency to become conspicuous it is heavily repressed; only at rare intervals is it allowed to figure in the public eye. Once a year, perhaps, on Speech Day, in the stuffy atmosphere of a summer's afternoon, it makes a rather shambling and undignified appearance, of little or no educational value, beyond displaying the fact that a good French accent is taught, that Greek at Public Schools is not quite a dead language, and that even in English the boy's sense of drama is inarticulate. This last point is not to be wondered at, but it should not be paraded in front of parents as if were something to be proud of, a sort of advertisement of the school. It should be either hidden or remedied.

The great obstacle to any innovation at a Public School is not so much tradition as prejudice. "Acting," says authority, "is at best a hobby, a recreation for the holidays. At school it is a waste of time, and a distraction from the serious business of term." Like all purely destructive criticisms, this view is based on a refusal from indifference or more often from lack of sympathy, to examine the advantages as well as the disadvantages of a new idea.

It may be of interest to some unbiased educationalists to hear the results of two experiments recently tried with a form of boys of about fifteen years of age.

On the first occasion, Sheridan's "The Critic," on the second, Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice," had been set as part of the "English" work for the term. Happily, with the permission of the authorities, the business of producing and ultimately performing these plays, instead of merely reading them through in school, was set on foot. Though spread over a number of weeks the aggregate time available for rehearsing was very limited. Critical study of the play and collective rehearsals were restricted to two hours a week. These were supplemented by occasional rehearsals of individuals during odd half hours out of school; in the ninth week of term the play had to be produced. Only one thing made it possible to bring such a scheme to a suc-

cessful conclusion—the vigorous co-operation of the form. With this assured, it was plain and easy sailing. Much of the interest displayed in the early stages arose, no doubt, from a hope of opportunities for "ragging." Later this gave place to the gradual discovery that they were dealing with a real play, with something connected with life, with drama, in fact.

The public performances of both these plays were more successful than anyone had dared to expect, simply because they revealed a fact that a few had grasped, the latent and uncultivated sense of drama that every normal boy of fifteen possesses. The master needs to provide little more than genuine enthusiasm and the willingness to expend a fair amount of physical and mental energy.

Certain advantages that would come from such an innovation are so easy to see that it is strange that they should not have been more generally recognized long ago. The study of Shakespeare is carried on at practically every school in England, but in what light is Shakespeare study regarded by the average boy? I have set essays many times to try and discover the answer to this question. In every case the answer is the same: the manner in which a Shakespeare play is dealt with is condemned or ridiculed. The insistence of the importance of long notes, the method of dealing with it *by scenes* instead of as a whole, the learning of isolated passages which are torn from their context in such a way that they lose their dramatic value, the tedium of listening to a bad reader stumbling through a long part which he has never set eyes on before, all these and many other well-founded criticisms point in the same direction. Nor is their criticism always intentional. Reference to the play in hand as a "book," or to Shakespeare as "an author many of whose stories have since been dramatized," recommendations to learn long passages of Shakespeare "because you are very likely to find them useful in examinations," are all unconscious condemnations of this method of study.

An obvious result of developing the boy's dramatic sense will be to teach him to

approach Shakespeare in the only attitude Shakespeare demanded in the people for whom he wrote. He must be regarded first and foremost as a *dramatist*, a writer of plays to be acted, and not to be read. By being made to concentrate on that side of a dramatist's art which to him is of secondary importance, the sources, the verse, the meaning of obscure passages and out-of-date allusions, the language even, boys lose sight of that which is to the dramatist of paramount importance, the characterization, the revelation of drama, not only in the theatre but in life. There is no better way of cultivating this new, and true, attitude, than by making boys act Shakespeare.

Here very briefly, and in summary, are the reasons for my conviction. First from a literary standpoint, the real greatness of the dramatist is brought out in a way that cannot otherwise be appreciated. So far from breeding contempt, this new familiarity with the play gives it a new appearance, it endues the lines with what hitherto they lacked, life; it photographs the play on the mind where it remains as a permanent memory, not merely the words, but the situations, the characters, and above all the sense of reality, which make them live. Secondly, it is essential in the production of a play that the actors should make themselves heard. Elocution must be developed and as far as possible perfected. The average Public Schoolboy leaves school with very little idea of expressing himself before an audience coherently, let alone fluently or elegantly. It is obviously undesirable that he should at this early age make a practice of public speaking. But it is very desirable that one whose destiny it is to be a "leader of men," should be *able* to speak with assurance and some facility in the presence of an audience. The sooner he realizes his lack of this faculty, and is afforded the means of developing it, the better will be his chance of "making good" in his future career. Thirdly, his sense of the dramatic is developed. It will not be long before he is aware that elocution alone carries no conviction in the playing of a part. He will soon begin to perceive that something more than mere *sound* is required in the actor, if he is to hold his audience. He will realize, perhaps unconsciously, that

in order to do this he must establish a bond of sympathy between them and himself, that he must for the time *be* the character that he is representing, move as he would move, look as he would look, feel as he would feel. By cultivating this art he will not only experience personally these wonderful moments of controlling an audience; he may also learn the habit of putting himself mentally in other people's positions, an invaluable faculty for any man to acquire while still young.

Lastly, and with the hesitation that befits a layman in this branch of knowledge, I would emphasize the psychological value of acting plays in the education of the adolescent. Judging solely by experience, and not by anything that I have either read or heard, I believe that the psychological effect of introducing drama thus, with discretion, into their curriculum would be entirely beneficial. Apart from, but no doubt as a partial result of, the increased critical and literary appreciation, I found that the discipline improved very noticeably; ragging and idleness practically disappeared. General industry, not only in English subjects, but in all branches of form work improved, and as a general rule the boys who had the longer parts, and consequently most learning of words to do, rose often from very low places in the form order to very high places in the final order at the end of the term. The effect on notoriously troublesome boys was remarkable in this connexion. The reason for this change is not difficult to understand. The tumultuous state of the adolescent mind finds, probably without being aware of it, an outlet, a sort of safety-valve. Instead of blowing off in hooliganism, rowdiness, and in the many less wholesome ways, well known but so hard to cope with, it finds a legitimate means of escape.

Much more might be said on these lines. Obviously some boys benefit more than others from the opportunities of self-expression and self-discovery thus provided. But the general result, at all events in my own case—and I have no object in presenting a distorted view of these experiments—is entirely satisfactory, so satisfactory that I feel impelled to offer it as a suggestion to others.

T. F. C.

A LITTLE THEATRE FOR MANCHESTER

"**A**T last," the Unnamed Society may well exclaim in gratified, if somewhat tired, accents, "at last!" The reason being that we possess a room of our own—at last. Verily, it was time. Any producer will know what it meant to attempt elaborate experimental plays with only one dress rehearsal on the actual stage and with the actual lighting used during the week of performances. How, under these circumstances, we ever had a smooth first night remains a mystery. Of course a certain hard-gained knowledge of the room and of the lights were a help; but in general—seeing that these conditions are not unusual—there must be a special providence tenderly watching over amateur productions, or how on earth are the plays performed at all? But after years of labour some of these tribulations are over for the Unnamed Society. And we have the temerity to consider we have deserved our luck. No Society has worked harder for its room, and once found, night after night its members have toiled there, transforming it from a dismal, blackened warehouse into a Little Theatre, that even an American might envy. Mark how boastful we are becoming. And why not? Anyone who reads the Old Testament will perceive that all the best people boast.

Behold us then in our little room, the room that has been prayed for, hoped for, worked for so long and so diligently. True, it could have come a little earlier. But we are not in the United States and no merchant prince arose and endowed us heavily or built us a rococo playhouse. So we searched painfully during a period when offices and warehouses to let were rare, and when vacant, prohibitive, or impossible from other points of view—not every citizen wants his basement or attic to be the scene of strange mumblings by night. But eventually the right room was found, although truth compels one to state that it could, possibly, have been in a better neighbourhood. This is no disparagement to the very excellent neighbourhood in which we find ourselves. As a neighbourhood it manages with amazing success to display

well-known characteristics of the euphemistically termed Industrial Revolution. And it is fitting that to such a district should come on swift feet, colour, music, and fantasy. But in order that other things should come as well, including an adequate audience, an ingenious map had to be devised. Armed with this the most obtuse seeker after dramatic refreshment cannot go far astray.

The decoration of the room was designed by William Grimmond, and is a simple and effective scheme of primrose and black relieved by touches of gold. The proscenium opening is framed in a broad, gold band and has blue curtains on which sport two golden antelopes—the antelope, incidentally, being the symbol of the Society. Curtains of the same shade of blue mask the windows and entrance. The stage itself is hung with curtains of a deeper blue.

Naturally, in any Society which has reduced scenic complications to a minimum, lighting is of paramount importance, and the equipment designed and erected by Peter Bax should be of interest to all Little Theatre experts. The chief points of note are the dimmers and the intensifying reflectors used on the battens. The former are of a specially arranged and very cheap liquid type, taking up a negligible amount of space. Twelve circuits may be dimmed separately, the cost of the whole twelve dimmers being only about £5—note the canny North! The reflectors are also a valuable experiment, as by directing the light exactly where required very intense and brilliant results can be achieved, at the same time keeping the current consumption down to about 9 or 10 amperes. The voltage is 220 and the total candle-power available is 5,000.

So, with high hopes, we begin the season's work. Of course it will be some time before the new room gathers to itself the wealth of memories and traditions that clung to the studio in which we worked for so long. But it is a definite step forward; and with fresh opportunities for greater freedom we anticipate a memorable season. At least it will be a memorable season for us, whatever happens.

F. SLADEN-SMITH,



THE JOURNAL OF
THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

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Telephone : GERRARD 8011.

Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.

ON another page we print a full report of the Business Conference held at Bath. To do justice to the two days' Festival as a whole would mean that this entire issue of DRAMA would be taken up with reports of the various items in what was generally admitted to have been a most successful programme. Luckily, the Festival was fully noticed by the London and provincial Press, so that members of the Drama League who were not present at Bath have already had an opportunity of reading full accounts of the proceedings.

This opportunity, however, must not be lost of reiterating the League's thanks to all those who helped to make our Festival a success. Particularly would we thank Alderman Cedric Chivers, the Mayor of Bath, who allowed the Festival to synchronize with the unveiling of the Tablet in memory of Sheridan's residence in Bath, and who also invited the Drama League delegates to luncheon at the Guildhall afterwards. We would also thank Miss de Reyes for placing Citizen House at the dis-

posal of our delegates, and for her generous entertainment of them, both personal and dramatic. The three little plays which she produced on the Saturday evening were warmly appreciated. Thanks are also due to Mr. Charles McEvoy for organizing the performance of his play, "David Ballard," which drew a crowded audience on the Friday afternoon, and to Mr. Harold Downs, the secretary of the Bath Playgoers, for much valuable assistance in the organization of the Conference. And last, but not least, we would thank Miss Elsie Fogerty and the other speakers at the Drama League meeting at the Pump Room on the Friday evening.

Mr. Bernard Shaw must have a paragraph all to himself. Fresh from his triumphs at Birmingham, Mr. Shaw was in very fact the hero of the occasion. Having already spoken three times on the Friday morning and afternoon, he would have surprised no one if he had failed to redeem his promise to contribute to the speeches at the evening meeting of the Drama League at the Pump Room. Nevertheless, Mr. Shaw did not fail us, and for three-quarters of an hour held the large audience by one of the most vigorous and witty speeches that we have ever heard from him. After dealing with the efforts made to establish a National Theatre, Mr. Shaw said that one of the reasons why musical comedies were so popular was that people loved music. Therefore, he hoped that we would remember that the opera was a thing that might well be encouraged no less than drama. Villages might get musical performances when they could not get purely dramatic ones. They must be content to go on and do their own work in their own way, and not to start off in the faith and love of reforming others.

The invitation of the Liverpool Playgoers for the holding of the next Autumn Conference at Liverpool has been accepted with great pleasure. Another year we trust that Leicester may repeat the invitation which had to be regretfully declined.

"THE SPEAKING OF ENGLISH VERSE"

Reviewed by W. J. Turner.

THE SPEAKING OF ENGLISH VERSE. By Elsie Fogerty. J. M. Dent & Sons. 6s.

THE general public of this country is deeply indebted to Miss Elsie Fogerty, although it is almost totally unconscious of its debt. But whenever you hear in a theatre an actor or an actress speaking the English language with exceptional clarity, intelligence and musical understanding, you may be sure that he or she was either at one time or another a pupil of Miss Fogerty's Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art, or had somewhere come under the "Fogerty" influence.

Miss Fogerty has almost stamped out that abominable vice of elocution which ravaged Great Britain and her Colonies during the nineteenth century. She has succeeded when the poets themselves failed, for they instinctively shrank from any attempt at showing how their verse should be spoken, knowing the extraordinary difficulty of speaking verse aloud without murdering it and therefore preferring that their work should be read in solitude with the utmost concentration of mind and ear. Until the nineteenth century, verse was commonly used in the theatre and all our great dramatists from Marlowe to Congreve were known as poets. Had this use of verse prevailed in the theatre, it would have necessitated writers paying particular attention to the proper speaking of verse, but as all the finest poetry of the nineteenth century was written not for the stage but for the study, writers were cut off from any control of verse-speaking and they have every reason to bless Miss Fogerty for stepping down into the arena and devoting her time and energy to giving the requisite guidance.

That she has the necessary understanding of verse to do this her book now amply proves. Miss Fogerty is acquainted with the work of the best authorities on prosody and is alive to the truth that there are no rules, that scansion is a mere matter of counting, that it at best merely "puts us right when we lose our instinctive rhythm," and that the proper training is a slow

development of sensitiveness to the music of verse, which "music" includes so much more than metre, rhythm and vowel harmony. Modern verse is getting more and more complex in harmony, just as modern music is, and there is some verse which it is almost impossible to speak aloud adequately. Here again Miss Fogerty gives sound advice when she says: "The effects at which such poems aim are lyric, never dramatic. It is the music of the verse, poetic richness in the texture of the poem, concentration and avoidance of all didactic, argumentative, or explanatory inflections which must be felt."

BRISTOL'S "LITTLE THEATRE."

FOR some time the Bristol Rotary Club has had it in mind to promote a season of repertory plays, Miss Muriel Pratt's address to them a year or two ago having been a stimulus. A committee representative of various amateur theatrical interests in the city, the Press, and Rotarians keenly interested in such a season has been formed. The Corporation is prepared in the Lesser Colston Hall, to make a stage and light it properly, curtain the hall, and put in tip-up seats on three tiers, each a foot above the other. It is not possible yet, apparently, to rake the floor properly, owing to existing contracts for other entertainments.

The Rotary Club, through the committee, is prepared to put on from December 17, a 13-weeks' season of plays of general interest, neither high brow nor low brow, at a time when pantomime occupies three theatres of the city. It has engaged Mr. Rupert Harvey of the "Old Vic." as producer, and he will select a good versatile company, without "stars"—a company that can be relied upon to make good in repertory all round.

It has been decided to call the venture Bristol's "Little Theatre."

In the balcony a café is to be established for patrons. There are about 550 seats in the hall, and if 400 a-night are occupied, the thing will pay.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

THE OTTAWA DRAMA LEAGUE.

On the threshold of a new season members of the Drama League and the public generally are reminded of the objects of the League, which are: to entertain its members and the public by dramatic and choregraphic performances; to stimulate public interest in the drama; to encourage the art of acting among its members and, in so far as may be possible, to teach the main principles of the art.

In pursuance of this purpose the Executive has prepared an outline programme for the season of 1923-24, which, it is hoped, will in retrospect be found to have fulfilled these ideals.

There will be at least four performances at the Little Theatre; the dates and programmes will be announced from time to time. There will be one performance at the close of the season in the Russell Theatre. The famous dramatic reciter, Ruth Draper, has again been engaged to delight us by her versatility and charm. Mr. Jack Soanes has been engaged as producer; and the incidental music at the Little Theatre will be an enjoyable part of the evenings there.

Our constitution provides that anyone in sympathy with the objects of the League may become a member.

The membership fee is \$2.00, which entitles each subscriber to one admission to all performances at the Little Theatre. Guest tickets, for any performance at the Little Theatre, may be purchased by members at fifty cents (50c.) each.

NORTH LONDON GROUP.

The North London Group of the British Drama League announce the production of "If I were King," by Justin Huntly McCarthy, at 7.30, on Thursday, November 15th, in the Great Hall of the Northern Polytechnic, Holloway Road, N.7. Tickets, price 3s. 6d., 2s. 4d., and 1s. 10d. (reserved), and 1s. 3d. (unreserved), may be obtained from Mr. Frederic Tomlin, 40, Jackson Road, N.7.

PLYMOUTH.

Nearly twelve months ago the Drama League was asked to award the prize in a one-act play competition organized by the Ashburton Group, Red Lion Square. The prize was awarded to "The Greater Law," by Mr. Leonard C. White, and the little play has now been produced with much success at the Plymouth Repertory Theatre. The *Western Morning News* referred to Mr. White's play as "a delightful one-act comedy," and went on to say that "one can easily understand the reason for its being placed first in the recent competition under the auspices of the British Drama League."

MARY WARD SETTLEMENT.

On October 20th, 24th, and 25th, the Repertory Company of the Dramatic Art Centre, Mary Ward Settlement, gave performances of John Drinkwater's "Mary Stuart." A remarkable and finished performance of the name-part, on the acting of which so much depends, was given by Mrs. Fortescue Flannery. Mr. Harold Ridge, who was also responsible for the lighting and (jointly) for the really beautiful setting of the play proper, matched this performance with a striking study of Darnley. The excellence of the work of these two members of the Company emphasized a rather amateurish lack of precision in the minor parts, which would not otherwise have been so noticeable. But we have made it evident that Miss Maude Scott (Director and Producer) is again to be congratulated.

SHIREHAMPTON.

The Shirehampton Branch of the Drama League gave a capital performance of "The Importance of Being Earnest," on October 24, before a large and most appreciative audience. The cast was uniformly good, Miss Hack being an attractive Gwendoline, Mr. Ryan excellent as Worthing, and Mr. Powell a subtle Chasuble. Masefield's "Nan" will be performed in December.

MINUTES OF THE BATH CONFERENCE

At Citizen House, Saturday, Oct. 27.

Mr. Whitworth, who was voted to the Chair, reported that as it had been found impossible to obtain the official sanction of the Authors' Society for the Drama League's scheme of payment by royalties in lieu of fixed fees, the League had sent a letter to fifty-four dramatic authors asking them to reply as to whether they favoured the royalty scheme on principle. Eighteen had replied in favour—six were definitely opposed and thirty had not replied at all.

Letters were read opposing the proposal from Mr. Brighouse, Miss Gertrude Jennings, and Mr. A. A. Milne. Letters were read approving the scheme from Mr. Arnold Bennett, Mr. John Galsworthy, Mr. St. John Ervine and others.

Mr. Whitworth then reported that the replies had been considered by the Council of the League, who had framed the following resolution which he then read to the meeting:—

"That the Council of the League favours a royalty basis of payment for amateur performances of plays with the proviso that a minimum of 10s. per act should be paid and that the amount of the royalty should be fixed by the dramatist concerned.

"That the Society of Authors should again be approached and if they cannot see their way to sanction the scheme, that the League should publish, for the benefit of its members, a list of those dramatists willing to accept the royalty system in lieu of fixed fees."

This resolution was proposed by Miss Radford and seconded by Mr. Eastwood.

Mr. Hannam Clark stated that he was in favour of the resolution but that he would like to point out that his experience of country audiences had been that the average takings amounted to £10. He was also convinced that a large number of performances were held without any author's fee being paid, and he suggested that it should be brought before the notice of the authors that if they would accept more reasonable terms this abuse would be minimized.

Mr. Colls stated that he was entirely in agreement with the resolution. Their experience in Liverpool had been that the costumes, scenery, and hire of hall were larger items of expense than the author's fees, and he considered that under no circumstances should the minimum fee be less than 10s. per act.

Mr. du Garde Peach stated that he was connected with the Exeter Drama League, whose practise it was to produce plays with a minimum of expense. They admitted the audience free and therefore paid no author's fee.

Mr. Napier Miles inquired as to the case of plays being performed by authors who had died.

Miss Maude Scott stated that the executors should be approached, and Mrs. Fenton stated that in most of these cases the rights were held by Messrs. French.

Mrs. Rogers pointed out that the excessive fee to be paid frequently prevented the performance of good plays.

Miss Scott inquired if it was illegal to give a free performance without paying author's fees.

Mr. Peach stated that he had recently consulted a solicitor on this question and he gathered that the only step an author could take in such a case was to issue an injunction against the production of the play.

Miss Fogerty pointed out that in about five years' time the League would have a good list of authors at its back, and would then be in a strong enough position to approach Messrs. French with a good chance of success.

Mr. Eastwood stated that he wished to make it clear that under no circumstances was there any desire to evade payment.

Miss Gwen John stated that there was a tendency to divide plays into scenes instead of acts, and she asked if the minimum of 10s. per act would be paid irrespective of the length of the play.

Mr. Whitworth was asked so to frame the resolution as to meet this difficulty.

The resolution was then carried unanimously.
Membership of the League.

Mr. Whitworth stated that there had been a very satisfactory influx of new members and groups during the past few weeks, and he was most anxious that the membership should reach 1,000 in order that the League should be self-supporting.

Mr. Colls stated that this Society—the Liverpool Playhouse Circle—had a membership approaching 1,000, and they would be willing to pay an increased subscription, especially if their members could have the magazines supplied.

Mr. Whitworth replied that DRAMA could be sent to affiliated Societies for the subscription of 3s. a year if not less than ten subscriptions are sent at a time. Also, a Society having, say, 500 members, could have one or two pages inserted in the magazine for their own news. An estimate as to cost could be worked out if desired.

Mr. Napier Miles proposed and Mr. Downs seconded the following resolution:—

"That affiliated Societies with a membership of fifty should pay a subscription of one guinea and an extra guinea for every additional fifty members."

Mr. Eastwood proposed an amendment that a guinea should be paid for every 100 members. This amendment was seconded by Mr. Milnes.

Miss John pointed out that a Society such as the Stage Society would probably not be prepared to pay more than one guinea.

Miss Radford stated that when her Society, the Sheffield Playgoers, had shown a balance on the year's working they had voluntarily paid an extra guinea, but lately they had shown a deficit and therefore she was afraid they could not afford more. She also pointed out that the amount of subscription paid by her members was very low.

Miss Rogers was of the opinion that the Bristol Playgoers would not be able to increase their subscription.

Mr. Peach suggested that a distinction should be made between producing and non-producing societies.

Mr. Napier Miles having agreed to the amendment, the resolution, which was seconded by Mr. Downs, ran as follows:—

"That this conference recommends for the consideration of the Council the adoption of an increase of subscription of affiliated Societies. The rate suggested being one guinea for every hundred members."

The motion was then carried—thirteen in favour and seven against.

Mr. Patterson pointed out that before any such change in subscription was made the opinion of every affiliated Society would be consulted and the matter would also be brought before the annual meeting.

Voting Power of Affiliated Societies.

Mr. Colls asked if the conference, in view of the previous resolution, would consider the revision of the voting power of the societies—he urged that the votes should be in proportion to the membership of the Society.

Mrs. Eckhard stated that she was opposed to this proposal as delegates from a distance would very easily be outvoted by those who lived near and were able to be fully represented.

Mr. Patterson stated that in that case one delegate could represent the number of votes owned by his Society.

The Chairman stated that the question would be considered by the Council of the League.

Mr. Milnes expressed a wish that the League meetings could be more widely reported in the Press, and Mr. Whitworth stated that he agreed that this was desirable.

Place of Autumn Conference, 1924.

Mr. Whitworth read a letter from Mr. Clellow, of the Leicester Drama Society, inviting the League very cordially to hold its conference in Leicester in the autumn of 1924.

Mr. Colls stated that he was empowered by the Liverpool Playhouse Circle to extend an invitation to Liverpool. His Society was forming an association with all the amateur societies round Liverpool—some members of the City Council were interested in the movement and also a lectureship on Drama had been instituted at Liverpool University.

The matter was discussed, and it was finally proposed by Mrs. Eckhard, seconded by Mr. Hannam Clark, and resolved:—

"That the League should accept the invitation of the Liverpool Playhouse Circle to hold its Autumn Conference in 1924 in Liverpool."

Donation from Mr. Bernard Shaw.

Miss Elsie Fogerty announced to the meeting that she had just represented the League in saying good-bye to Mr. Bernard Shaw at the Pump Room. She reported that Mr. Shaw, on being asked to what cause he would like the proceeds of his lecture on Friday morning to be given, had replied, "to the British Drama League." Miss Fogerty therefore was able to hand to Mr. Whitworth the sum of £17 17s. 6d.

A hearty vote of thanks was passed to Mr. Shaw.

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to Miss de Reyes for so kindly lending her room for the conference, proposed by Miss Fogerty, seconded by Mrs. Rogers, and carried unanimously.

To the Editor of DRAMA.

SIR,—Mr. St. John Ervine, in his letter in the July DRAMA, objects to the amateur benefiting gratis by the professional author. He writes: "Our (?) feeling is that they (the amateurs) are attempting to entertain themselves at our expense."

May I quote the following from an article by Mr. Ervine from the *Observer*, August 26, 1923:—"The whole world would now be a paltry place in which to live if all other men of genius had bargained with it as . . . bargains." Mr. Ervine then proceeds to preach further on this admirable theme. But why does he not practise what he preaches? When it comes to allowing the worthy amateurs to benefit gratis, to use his plays without paying him, Mr. Ervine snorts, "I wish the British Drama League would impress on amateurs the fact that dramatists earn their living by their plays, and that they have no more right to exploit a dramatist than they have to exploit a butcher or a grocer."

So writes your sincerely St. John Ervine; and I am yours faithfully,

JOHN SEMAR, Editor of *The Mask*.

To the Editor of DRAMA.

SIR,—I am obliged to you for letting me see Mr. John Semar's letter. He is like his master, precipitate and too ready to believe what he wants to believe. As you are aware, I have agreed to the scheme proposed by the British Drama League, so far as my own plays are concerned, although I think there should be a minimum royalty paid to the dramatist by the societies in order to prevent them from exploiting him any more than they are already prepared to do. Mr. Semar's cock-a-whooch charge, therefore, that I do not practise what I preach, means precisely what nine-tenths of the stuff in *The Mask* means: nothing at all. I notice that Mr. Semar puts a question mark after the word "our" in the quotation which he makes from my letter to you. This, I suppose, denotes a doubt in his mind of my right to speak for my brother-dramatists. It happens, however, that I am a member of the sub-committee of the Authors' Society which deals with the affairs of dramatists, and that I was chairman of the meeting which considered your proposals. My letter to you, therefore, was a definite statement of the general opinion of dramatists on this matter. The analogy which Mr. Semar attempts to draw between Mr. Craig's position and that of the dramatists as expressed by me does not bear examination, but I cannot spare the time nor ask you for the space in which to explain why it does not. May I add, however, that it is about time Mr. Gordon Craig and his adoring disciples gave up this unmanly habit they have of whining and snivelling about England's neglect of Mr. Craig. A great man once said to me that nothing frightens Mr. Craig so much as a chance to put his principles into practice. The truth is that Mr. Gordon Craig is the Mrs. Patrick Campbell of decorative artists, so involved in his damned temperament that he cannot get on with his work.

Yours faithfully,

ST. JOHN ERVINE.

[We feel bound to print the above letters, though we do so with regret. We cannot feel sympathy with the expressions of either correspondent.—ED.]

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This letter is typical of many received from those who have made use of the Play Writers' Bureau.

SIR,—Thank you for returning “* * *” and enclosing your reader's sympathetic report. I will certainly let you have the play again, as soon as the alterations are finished, which should be in about a week's time. As a matter of fact the alterations we are making are very much on the lines suggested by your reader: we are trying, without altering the main idea of the play, to bring in more action and less explanatory matter. We are also altering the end, which, as your reader suggests, seems to have puzzled and disappointed people, when it was played. But if the play were ever published, it might be preferable to stick to the original ending.

It may interest your reader to know that the two things he puts his finger upon, too little action and an unusual ending, were the two things that counted against the play when it was produced. It was read by several excellent judges before its production, but no one spotted these things.

Yours faithfully,

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?

Y

SH
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